

LIVES WORKING PAPER 2018 / 65

IS THERE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR A LONGER AND MORE GENDER EQUAL LEAVE SCHEME IN SWITZERLAND?

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RESEARCH PAPER

<http://dx.doi.org/10.12682/lives.2296-1658.2018.65>

ISSN 2296-1658



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Abstract

Switzerland has a comparatively short and gendered leave scheme: paid maternity leave lasts 3,5 months and there are no statutory paternity or parental leaves. In the past decade this issue has received increased public and political attention and a popular initiative in favor of a 4-week paid paternity leave was successfully submitted and will be put to national vote. The present study addresses this highly topical issue by analyzing individuals' attitudes toward three dimensions of leave policies (ideal leave length; gender division of leave; and leave financing system) and whether there is public support for a longer and more gender equal leave scheme in Switzerland. The study is based on 2013 MOSAiCH survey data, which is representative of the Swiss population aged 18 and over (N=1181).

Results show divided preferences regarding the ideal leave length, with about half of the sample wanting a leave that exceeds the current one (i.e., 5 months or more). This proportion rises to 68% among women under 50 years of age, suggesting that a gender and generational cleavage exists. Results show on the contrary a large consensus regarding gender division of leave preferences. About 80% of respondents consider that fathers should at least take part of the leave; and among them, about half consider they should share it equally. Logistic regression analyses show that institutional and cultural factors, as well as individuals' life course stage and values are associated with wanting a longer and a more gender equal leave scheme. The article concludes on the implications of the results, in the wake of a national vote on paid paternity leave implementation.

Keywords

welfare state | leave policies | attitudes | policy preferences | gender equality | Switzerland

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* *LIVES Working Papers* is a work-in-progress online series. Each paper receives only limited review. Authors are responsible for the presentation of facts and for the opinions expressed therein, which do not necessarily reflect those of the Swiss National Competence Center in Research LIVES.

** This study was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation; SNSF grant nos. 158920 and 171457.

1. Introduction

The Swiss welfare state has developed in a delayed and incremental way due notably to institutional and political factors, as well as to the prevalence of a liberal ideology (e.g., Armingeon, 2001; Obinger, Armingeon, Bonoli, & Bertozzi, 2005). In the field of family policies the development has been even slower, and support for work-family balance has not reached comparable levels as in continental European neighbors (e.g., Häusermann, 2010). This is especially the case regarding the leave entitlements granted to employed parents in order to care for their newborn child. Switzerland represents an interesting case study within the European landscape since it has an exceptionally minimal and gendered leave scheme (Moss, 2015; Valarino, 2014). Since 2005 only, there is a federal paid maternity leave of 14 weeks (3,5 months). Yet, there is no statutory parental or paternity leave, which implies that employed men are not entitled to any federal leave when they become fathers.

Maternity leave is a health and welfare measure intended to protect the health of the mother and newborn child. In addition, European countries also grant a parental leave, usually to be taken after the end of maternity leave. It is a care measure, typically ranging from 6 months to 3 years, which is intended to give both parents an opportunity to spend time caring for a young child (Moss, 2015). However, parental leaves are often paid at low levels of earnings replacement or are unpaid. Switzerland does not have such a parental leave, may it paid or unpaid, nor does it grant a paternity leave to fathers. Most European countries have also implemented a paternity leave of a few days and up to a few weeks. This leave, which is usually paid, is to be taken soon after the birth of the child to enable the father to spend time with his partner, the new child and older children.

In the past decade the lack of parental and paternity leaves has received increased attention in the Swiss public and political spheres (Valarino, 2014, forthcoming). For instance, from 1995 to 2014, 33 policy proposals were submitted in favor of a parental or paternity leave in Parliament (Valarino, forthcoming). However, none found a majority in both Chambers. In May 2016 a committee grouping various civil associations launched a popular initiative in favor of a paid paternity leave of 4 weeks (Federal Chancellery, 2018). In July 2017 the 100,000 signatures necessary for a popular initiative to be submitted to the electorate had been collected (107,075 valid signatures recorded). In October 2017 the Federal Council recommended to reject this proposal, arguing the cost was too high for the

Swiss economy and that the priority should be to increase childcare services. Nevertheless, the Swiss electorate will be called to vote on a paid paternity leave within the next two to three years.

Attitudes toward leave policies are therefore a highly relevant object of study. The present article has two objectives. Firstly, it aims to assess public opinion toward paid leaves for parents. It asks: How long do individuals consider paid leave for parents should last? How should the mother and the father share this leave between them? And who should finance leave expenses? Secondly, the study analyzes the factors related to wanting a longer and a more gender equal leave scheme, compared to the currently existing one. It aims to answer the following question: Who is more likely to be dissatisfied? For this purpose welfare attitudinal theories are used in order to understand which factors are related to leave policy preferences (see for example Kangas, 1997; Svallfors, 2012; Valarino, Duvander, Haas, & Neyer, 2018). According to institutional theory, the regional context in which individuals are embedded is expected to influence their attitudes and to orient their views about what they consider “normal” and “legitimate” policies. Following self-interest theory, individuals are also expected to follow a rational logic and to support measures they (are likely to) benefit from. Finally ideational theory suggests that individuals’ ideas and values will influence what they consider desirable policies.

The study is based on 2013 MOSAiCH survey data, which is representative for the Swiss population aged 18 and over (N=1181). In the frame of this survey, the International Social Survey Programme module *Family and Changing Gender Roles IV* was fielded. The main variables of interest concern individuals’ views on the ideal length of leave for employed parents, what they consider as the best gender division of leave between the mother and the father, and the preferred financing source (the state, the employers, or both) for covering these expenses. Analyses consist in descriptive statistics that enable to depict leave policy preferences among Swiss residents as well as logistic regression analyses in order to analyze the correlates of preferring a longer and more gender equal leave scheme than the current one.

The paper is divided in six sections. In Section 2 the Swiss leave scheme (maternity, paternity and parental leaves) and its specificities are briefly described. In Section 3, the

theoretical and empirical frameworks, which guide the study, are presented. Section 4 presents the research design, data and the methods used for the study. In Section 5 the descriptive results regarding leave policy preferences are outlined and in Section 6 the logistics regression results are presented. Finally Section 7 provides a discussion of results and concluding remarks about the study.

2. The Swiss leave scheme on the political agenda

Leave policies are entitlements to job protected leaves for employed parents around childbirth and during the child's first years. Benefits may be targeted to mothers (*maternity leave*), fathers (*paternity leave*) and to both parents as individual or family entitlements (usually referred to as *parental leave*). The combination of these different leaves form a specific "leave scheme". Considerable variation exists between the leave schemes implemented in Western industrialized countries (Moss, 2015). For instance while in the USA there are no statutory paid leaves for employed parents, in Sweden the total length of post-natal paid leave is 16 months and in Germany 13 months (Moss, 2015). In France parents can take a leave until the child reaches 3 years of age and receive benefits if they have two or more children and if both parents share leave period.

Comparatively, the Swiss leave scheme is limited and gendered; paid maternity leave lasts 3,5 months and there are no paternity or parental leaves (Valarino, 2014, forthcoming). It is noteworthy that the principle of paid maternity insurance was already anchored in the Swiss Constitution in 1945, but it was implemented in 2005 only, over 50 years after its European neighbors (Kammerman & Moss, 2009). Propositions in favor of maternity allowances were rejected in national votes in 1974, 1984, 1987 and 1999 (FCWI, 2001). Over time, the scope of policy proposals and the circle of beneficiaries were reduced: adoptive parents, fathers and stay-at-home mothers were progressively excluded from the drafted proposals. A major political mobilization took place in the aftermath of the 1999 failure of the Maternity Leave Insurance Act. It led to the acceptance in 2004 by 55% of the electorate of an interparty proposition (FCWI, 2011). Maternity was included in the Loss of Earnings Compensation Act (LECA), which previously only financed benefits for employees performing military or civil service. Since the implementation of this law in July 2005, employed and self-employed mothers receive 80% of their salary for 98 days (3,5 months). This corresponds to the minimum length set by the International Labor Organization (Addati,

Cassirer, & Gilchrist, 2014). The job protection continues for two additional weeks but with no financial compensation, unless the employer supplements the federal benefits.

There is currently no statutory parental or paternity leave. Some fathers may have access to leaves through special entitlements granted by their employers in the form of short paid paternity leaves (usually 1 or 2 days, and more rarely several weeks) and/or unpaid parental leave of several months to 1 or 2 years (FSIO, 2013; Fuchs, 2008; Valarino, 2016). However, this only concerns a minority of workers; approximately 27% of those covered by a collective labour agreement in 2009 (FSIO, 2013, p. 12). According to Brighthouse & Wright's (2008) typology, the Swiss leave scheme can therefore be qualified as “gender-equality impeding”, as men in Switzerland are not considered as caregivers by the State. This situation contrasts strongly with other European countries, in which parental leaves accessible to both mothers and fathers were introduced in the 1970s onwards (Hojgaard, 1997; Kamerman & Moss, 2009; Thévenon & Solaz, 2013). Furthermore, since the 2000s, many countries have reformed their leave schemes in order to encourage men's uptake rates by introducing father quotas and other gender equality incentives.

The delayed development of the Swiss leave scheme is mainly due to Swiss political institutions. The direct democratic political system implies multiple veto-players and the need to reach a broad consensus for a new law to be implemented (Armingeon, 2001; Obinger, 1998). Since Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, it was not bound to conform to EU directives on maternity leave (14 weeks since 1992) and parental leave (3 months for each parent since 1996, increased to 4 months in 2010) (European Union, 2010). The historical dominance of the right wing in the Swiss Parliament, as well as the late entry of women into politics at the federal level—1971—certainly played a role in delaying family policies and leave policies in particular (Armingeon, 2001; Martin, 2002; Obinger, 1998). Center and right wing parties are currently against implementing statutory paid parental or paternity leaves (FCWI, 2014).

Regarding attitudes and values, Switzerland is known to have a relatively liberal ideology towards state intervention in society (Armingeon, 2001, pp. 151-152). To some extent the predominance of individual responsibility explains the limited development of family policies in Switzerland (see Dafflon, 2003; Pfau-Effinger, 2008). There is reluctance

in the population regarding state regulation of what is considered as the “private sphere”. Gendered representations of the family certainly also contributed to the laggard development of the Swiss leave scheme (Studer, 1997). Mothers are considered the main and legitimate caregivers for a child (Bühlmann, Elcheroth, & Tettamanti, 2009; Levy, Widmer, & Kellerhals, 2002). However attitudes towards gender relations and welfare state expansion diverge among linguistic regions and rural and urban regions (Bühler, 2001).

Since the adoption of a minimal leave scheme for mothers, a window of opportunity for parental and paternity leave supporters has opened. In the past decade this issue has received increased attention in the Swiss public and political spheres. From 1995 to 2014, over 30 parliamentary proposals were submitted, yet without success to this day (Valarino, forthcoming). This indicates an increasing political concern about fathers’ access to a statutory leave and a more gender equal division of childcare. Lobbying activities from the Swiss labor union Travail.Suisse were especially marked. For instance in 2015 it mandated a representative survey about public opinion toward paid paternity leave (Travail.Suisse, 2015). Results indicated that 80% of respondents supported this measure, even though there were varying preferences regarding the length, ranging from one to six weeks or more. In May 2016 this union formed a committee – called “Paternity Leave now”¹ - together with three other umbrella associations representing masculine, feminine, and family associations and launched a popular initiative in favor of 4 weeks of paid paternity leave (Federal Chancellery, 2018). By July 2017, over 100,000 signatures had been collected and in August 2017 the Federal Chancellery confirmed the popular initiative had succeeded (Federal Chancellery, 2018). The initiative will therefore be submitted to national vote, likely within the next two to three years.

3. Theoretical and empirical framework of the study

Welfare attitudinal research literature provides essential insights into the factors that may be related to individuals’ support of care policies and of leave policies in particular (see for example Arts & Gelissen, 2001; Blekesaune & Quadagno, 2003; Mischke, 2014; Svallfors, 1997; Valarino et al., 2018; Van Oorschot, Reeskens, & Meuleman, 2012). Three dimensions are usually found to be at play in welfare attitudes: institutional and cultural, self-interest and ideational mechanisms.

According to institutional and cultural theory, the context in which individuals are embedded influences their attitudes and orients their views about what they consider “normal” and “legitimate” policies. Few studies have analyzed attitudes in Switzerland toward leave policies in particular (but see Bonoli & Häusermann, 2009; Staerklé, Roux, Delay, Gianettoni, & Perrin, 2003) and even less so taking into account the contextual factors that may influence individuals’ views (but see the comparative study by Valarino et al., 2018). In Switzerland, one can expect different institutional and cultural factors to impact what people think about leave policies and whether they would like more generous and more gender equal policies. The linguistic region – German speaking verses French and Italian speaking regions - in which people live is expected to play a role, since previous research on maternity insurance voting results showed that the former were less favorable than the latter (Bühler, 2001). The same study also revealed disparities between rural and urban contexts, with individuals living in urban environments more willing to implement maternity insurance than those in rural ones. According to the comparative study previously mentioned (Valarino et al., 2018), we know there are marked country differences regarding leave policy preferences. Compared to Swedes, Swiss and American residents were found significantly less likely to want a long paid leave (over one year) rather than a moderate one (5-12 months) and also more likely to want a short leave (0-4 months). This suggests that the country in which one is living or within which one has been socialized shapes one’s perception about legitimate leave schemes. Therefore for this study, it seems that citizenship (Swiss nationals verses foreigners or bi-nationals) could be used as an indicator of individuals’ experience with other contexts where other - possibly more generous - leave schemes exist.

According to self-interest theory (see for example Kangas, 1997; Svallfors, 2012) individuals follow a rational logic and are more likely to support measures they (are likely to) benefit from. Therefore individuals who are at a life stage where they can benefit from family policies – typically parents, women and younger cohorts - were found more supportive of family policies altogether (e.g., Lewin-Epstein, Stier, Braun, & Langfeldt, 2000; Mischke, 2014; Valarino et al., 2018). Research also shows that women are more likely than men to want fathers to benefit from leave policies and to want parents to share equally leave entitlements between them (Fox, Pascall, & Warren, 2009; Hyde, Essex, & Horton, 1993; Valarino et al., 2018). Further socioeconomic variables also seem influential. For instance, having a medium or high education results in a somewhat higher sense of entitlement to

family policies (Lewis & Smithson, 2001) and in higher support for maternity insurance implementation (Bonoli & Häusermann, 2009; Staerklé et al., 2003). Therefore in the present study focusing on attitudes toward more generous and gender equal leave policies in Switzerland, sex, age, parenthood, income, labor market activity and education are expected to be influential factors.

Finally ideational theory suggests that individuals' ideas and values influence what they consider desirable policies (see for example Kangas, 1997; Svallfors, 2012). For instance, political stance (adhering to left-wing parties) was associated with increased support for incentives to promote men's leave uptake (European Opinion Research Group, 2004). Individuals' belief about welfare state responsibility and their acknowledgement of structural gender inequalities in society were found to significantly influence their support for statutory paid maternity insurance (Staerklé et al., 2003). Gender equal attitudes also significantly predicted perceptions of fairness of parental leave implementation (Grover, 1991). On the contrary, gender traditional individuals were found more likely to favor a fully gendered division of leave among parents, as well as to reject a gender equal division of leave (Valarino et al., 2018). Also, the more individuals believed in state responsibility, the more likely they were to prefer a long leave and to reject a short one, as well as to prefer government funding and to reject employers' financing. For this study, it is therefore expected that individuals' values regarding childcare and their political stance will influence their views about leave policies in Switzerland. In addition religiosity is also expected to influence attitudes, since religious people may hold more traditional views on gender relations and therefore regarding men's role in childcare.

4. Research design, data and methods

The study is based on data from the module “Family and changing gender roles IV” of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP Research Group, 2016). This module was fielded in 2013 as part of the Measurement and Observation of Social Attitudes in Switzerland (MOSAiCH) survey. This module included for the first time several questions on attitudes towards leave for working parents, giving a unique opportunity to assess public opinion on this issue. The data allows capturing different dimensions of leave policy preferences such as leave length, gender division and financing source.

Respondents for Switzerland were drawn from a probabilistic sample representing the country's population aged 18 and above, and participated in a 1-hour CAPI face-to-face interview. The sample size of respondents who answered the main question of interest regarding attitudes toward leave length for parents is 1,181 (56 missing answers). Because of missing data for specific variables, the final sample size in multivariate analyses is 878 (359 missing cases).

The design of the study follows two research objectives. Firstly it aims to be informative about individuals' attitudes toward paid leave in Switzerland. For this purpose descriptive statistics are used regarding three dimensions of leave policy preferences: *leave length*, *gender division of leave* and *preferred financing source*. It is important to note that the survey items were designed for comparison purposes in the frame of the ISSP, and were therefore formulated in very general terms. This results in several limitations and in a lack of precision regarding individuals' attitudes.

Leave length is derived from the survey item: "Consider a couple who both work full-time and now have a new born child. One of them stops working for some time to care for their child. Do you think there should be paid leave available and, if so, for how long?". This question taps into individuals' representation of the total amount of leave parents should be granted, including maternity, parental and paternity leaves. The item asks about the ideal length of *paid* leave, but does not specify the exact level of compensation. It is likely that respondents in Switzerland inferred from the compensation rate existing for the Swiss maternity leave – i.e., 80 per cent of previous earnings – and considered the same rate would apply to their answer. However, this is only a hypothesis and it is not clear to what extent respondents actually knew the compensation rate in force for maternity leave.

Answers to this question range from 0 to 72 months and have a non-normal distribution. The mean is 6.3 (standard deviation is 7.2) and the median and the mode are 6 months. The variable was recoded into a 3 categorical variable: short (0-2 months, want a shorter leave than current one in Switzerland), medium (3-4 months, want a leave corresponding to current one) and long leave (>4 months, want a longer leave than current one). Cut values were chosen in relation to the existing leave scheme in Switzerland, i.e., 3.5 months of paid maternity leave.²

The *gender division of leave* was derived from the following item: “Still thinking about the same couple, if both are in a similar work situation and are eligible for paid leave, how should this paid leave period be divided between the mother and the father?”. Answers were recoded into the 3 following categories: fully gendered (the mother should take all the leave), partly gendered (the mother should take most, and the father some) and gender equal (the mother and the father should take half each).³ Unfortunately, there is some vagueness regarding what individuals’ had in mind when they chose the answer “the mother should take most, and the father some”. For some respondents, this answer may correspond to a leave length for fathers of one or two weeks while for others, it may correspond to a few months. This data limitation undoubtedly impacts on the interpretation that can be done of the results.

The *financing source* variable was derived from the following item: “And who should pay for this leave?”. Possible answers were the “government”, “the employer”, “both the government and the employer”. Individuals who answered other sources (49 respondents, 4% of the sample) were excluded from the analysis since it is not clear which financing source was considered appropriate and how to interpret this answer. This survey item enables taps into individuals’ representations of the extent to which the State is held accountable to finance leave policies and whether they are seen as a collective responsibility or a private one to be shouldered by the economy only.

Secondly, the study has an analytical objective: it aims to uncover the factors that are related to leave policy preferences in Switzerland. In particular it analyzes the correlates of wanting a longer and more gender equal leave for employed parents. For this purpose logistic regression method is applied. This method enables to assess the profile of individuals who are dissatisfied with the current leave scheme (those who expect a longer and a more gender equal leave scheme) and to test the three theories outlined in the previous section in order to understand leave policy preferences in Switzerland.

In order to identify the profile of individuals who want a longer leave than the existing one, a dummy variable distinguishing between individuals who want short or medium leaves (0-4 months, reference category) from those who want 5 months or more was created. And in order to analyze the profile of individuals who want a more gender equal leave scheme in Switzerland, I use a dummy variable distinguishing between individuals who want a fully

gendered leave (reference category) from those who prefer a partly gendered or a gender equal one.

The independent variables entered in the logistic regression models were chosen according to the three outlined theories and the expected relevant dimensions to understand leave policy preferences in Switzerland. Among self-interest variables, sex and age are combined into a single variable: women aged 18-49 years; women aged 50+; men aged 18-49; men aged 50+ (reference category).⁴ *Parenthood* is a categorical variable distinguishing between parents who are living in a household with at least one child under 6 years old, parents of children aged over 6 years old, and childless respondents (reference category). The *care load* variable captures the number of hours per week individuals perform in order to care for children or dependent family members. Three categories are distinguished between those who have none (reference category), those with medium care load (1 to 9 hours/week) and those with high care load (> 9 hours). Three *educational degrees* are distinguished: *primary* (includes those without any education, primary and lower secondary education; reference category), *secondary* degree (includes the upper secondary degree to post-secondary degree), and *tertiary* degree. The *labor market activity* is a categorical variable that distinguishes between those who do not work for pay (reference category), those working part-time (1-37 hours/week), and those working full-time (>37 hours/week).⁵ The *household income* captures the monthly income of the household in which the respondent lives: low income (< 5'200.- CHF/ month, reference category); medium income (5'200.- to 9'900.- CHF/month); high income (> 9'900.-CHF/month).⁶

The ideational variables entered in the model are the following. *Religiosity* is a categorical variable that captures the frequency of attendance to religious services (except for social events such as marriage, funeral etc.), distinguishing between high religiosity (frequent attendance; i.e. several times per week to once per month), medium religiosity (episodic attendance; i.e., several times a year to less than once a year), and non-religious (never attends religious services, reference category). *Childcare values* is a continuous variable, which captures gender traditional values of respondents regarding the family and childcare. It is calculated as the mean of four items tackling gender roles and childcare.⁷ It ranges from 1 to 5, where 1 represents the most gender equal values and 5 the most gender traditional values. The *political orientation* of individuals is captured with an item asking respondents to

which political party they feel the closest (if any). Considering the large number of missing answers due to the fact that individuals do not identify to any party, a missing category is coded as such in the analysis instead of being excluded. Three categories are distinguished, i.e., left-wing, center and right-wing orientation (reference category), as well as missing category.

Finally a set of variables aims to take into account cultural and institutional influences. The *linguistic region* is used as a contextual variable representing the cultural and institutional setting in which individuals live. It is a dummy variable distinguishing between German speaking respondents (reference category) and those from the Latin speaking region (French and Italian speaking respondents).⁸ *Living environment* is a self-assessed variable derived from a survey item asking the type of settlement that best corresponds to where respondents live. *Urban* includes people who perceive they live in cities, their suburbs, or in a town and *rural* corresponds to those living in a village or in the countryside (reference category). In order to capture exposition to other institutional and cultural settings with different – and possibly more generous and gender equal - leave schemes than the one in Switzerland, *citizenship* is used as a proxy. It is a dummy variable that distinguishes between respondents that are Swiss only (reference category), and those who have a foreign citizenship or who are bi-nationals (they hold a Swiss and another nationality)⁹.

5. Descriptive results

Results regarding *leave length preferences* reveal attitudes are divided among respondents. Figure 1 shows that about one fourth (26%) of respondents consider the current post-natal paid leave length in Switzerland (i.e., 3,5 months of leave benefits for mothers) is the appropriate and legitimate leave length parents should receive. The rest of respondents can be considered as being “dissatisfied”; i.e., they either consider paid leave should be shorter or longer. About one fifth of respondents (21%) consider there should be no paid leave, or only 1 or 2 months. A little over half of the sample (53%) considers leave should be longer than what currently exists in the federal legislation. The mean, median and the mode of the preferred leave length among respondents are 6 months.

When looking at specific social groups, a gender and a generational cleavage appears. Respondents in their childbearing and childrearing age (18-49 years) are proportionately more likely than those aged 50 or more to want a longer leave than the current one (62% and 44% respectively), and women are also more likely than men to do so (58% and 49% respectively). Taken together, this translates into 68% of women from the young cohort who would prefer a leave of at least 5 months or more. About 56% of men in this same cohort would also prefer a longer leave, and only 47% of women and 40% of men from the older cohort do so.

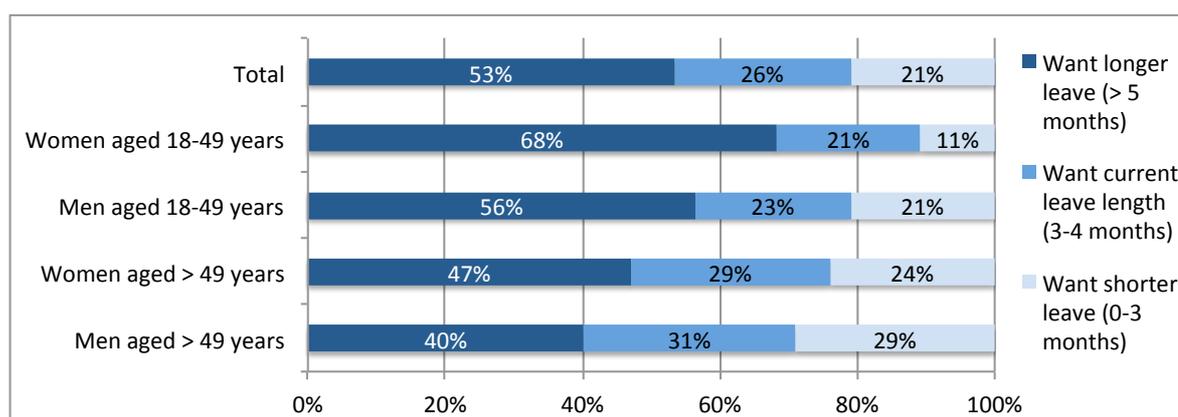


Figure 1: Distribution of answers regarding the leave length by sex and age group

Note: sample size 1181 respondents; 56 missing answers.

The second dimension of leave policy preferences concerns individuals' views about the way paid leave should be shared by parents; i.e., the ideal *gender division of leave* between the mother and the father. Figure 2 shows that overall only about one fifth of respondents consider the leave should be used entirely by mothers. There is a large consensus that fathers should take at least part of the leave; about 80% of respondents - 82% of women and 79% of men - agree on this. It is noteworthy that these preferences do not match the current statutory leave scheme in Switzerland, since fathers have no federal entitlement to leave policies. Among these “dissatisfied” individuals, there is a divide between those who consider mothers should use most of the leave and fathers should take some of it (41%), and those who support a gender equal division of leave where mothers and fathers would take half of the total leave each (39%).

Figure 2 shows that proportionately more women than men - independently of the age group they belong to - favor a strictly gender equal use of the leave, with a gender gap of

almost 10 percentage points. Generational differences exist mainly in relation with preferences for a fully gendered division of leave; it is most widespread among the older cohort.

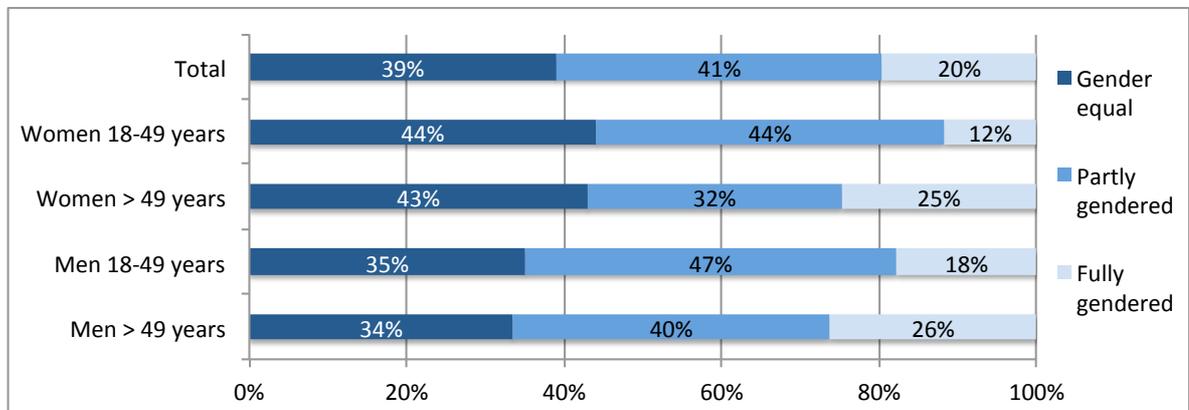


Figure 2. Distribution of answers regarding the preferred gender division of paid leave, by sex and age group

Note: sample size 1051 respondents; 186 missing answers.

The third dimension of leave policy preferences concerns the preferred *financing source* for leave expenses. Results show there is a consensus among respondents in favor of a shared financing by the government and by employers (64%). State financing is supported by one fourth of respondents, and employer liability is the least favored financing solution (11% of respondents).

Contrary to the two previous dimensions of leave policies analyzed, there are no attitudinal cleavages according to sex and cohort (see Figure 3). This suggests that a system where leaves are partly financed through a social insurance system (general taxes or wage contributions), as well as by direct transfers from employers to employees who are on leave, is deemed appropriate by a large majority in Swiss society. This system in fact matches the current one implemented for maternity leave, where a compensation of salary at 80% is guaranteed by the maternity insurance system for 3,5 months, which is equally financed by employers and employees (Loss of Earning Compensation Act fund). In addition, there exists a relatively common practice among employers to supplement these entitlements, either through full wage replacement and/or with a longer period of leave granted to mothers (Aeppli, 2012). The fact that only a minority of respondents considers the state as the sole

responsible to finance paid leaves can be linked to the longstanding social partnership tradition and the persisting liberal ideology in Switzerland (e.g., Armingeon, 2001; Trampusch, 2007).

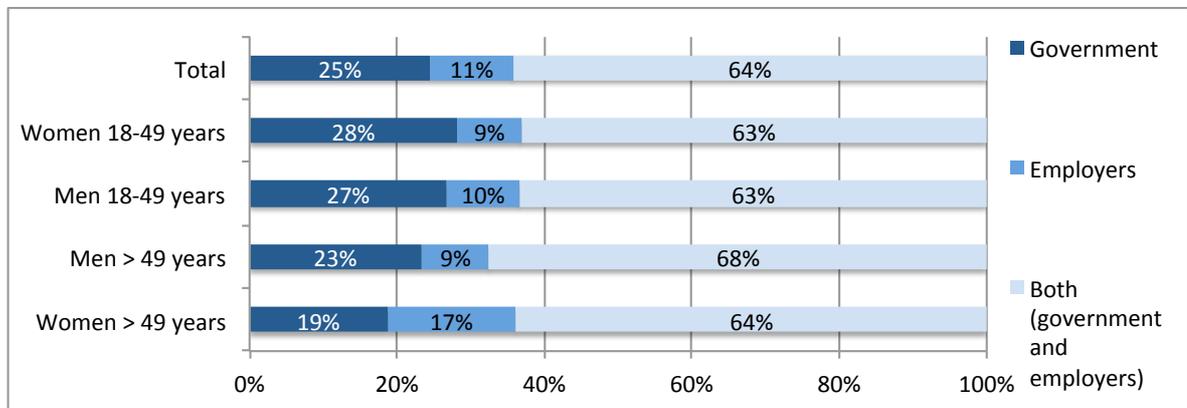


Figure 3. Distribution of answers regarding the preferred financing source of paid leave, by sex and age group

Note: sample size 1003; 234 missing answers.

6. Logistic regression results

Logistic regression analyses identify further correlates of leave policy preferences in Switzerland, especially among respondents who want a longer and a more gender equal leave scheme. Results for the two logistic regressions are presented in Table 1. Leave length preferences are significantly explained by the variables ($X^2(22) = 145.156, p < .001$) and the model explains about 20% of the variance (R^2 Nagelkerke = 0.204). Results show that the institutional and cultural dimension is influential. Being a bi-national or a foreigner increases the odds of wanting a longer leave as compared to being a Swiss citizen (Odds Ratios (OR): 2.00).¹⁰ This suggests that having been socialized as a bi-national or having likely grown up in another country implies that individuals have in mind and know about comparatively more extensive leave schemes. A possible similar context-related socialization mechanism takes place when it comes to the linguistic region in which people live. Individuals living in the Latin region have higher odds of wanting a longer leave scheme than those from the German-speaking region (OR: 2.18). This can be understood by the proximity and influence of other welfare and leave policies and ideologies regarding the role of the state. Results indicate that there is no significant influence of people's living environment.

Two self-interest variables are significantly related to wanting a longer paid leave than the current one. Women aged 18-49 years are more likely than men 50+ to want a longer leave (OR: 1.76). The effect is not significant for the older cohort of women and the younger cohort of men. Results also show that having a high care load increases the odds of wanting a longer leave compared to individuals who have none (OR: 1.76). Parents seem to be less likely to want a longer leave compared with childless respondents, even though coefficients are not significant. This would suggest that those who have managed with a limited leave scheme do not support more generous conditions, compared with childless respondents, among which a portion might benefit from improved measures. Results indicate that the positioning in the social structure (income, education, labor market activity) does not play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward leaves for parents.

Among the ideological variables entered in the model, religiosity and political orientation have a significant effect. Those who episodically attend religious services are less likely to want a longer paid leave for parents than the non-religious (OR: 0.70). This result may be understood by the valuing of a traditional family model where the male breadwinner model is seen as being in contradiction with a longer paid leave for parents. Being from a left-wing political party increases the odds of wanting a longer leave (OR: 3.21), as compared to those who are from the right-wing. Since those with missing information were not excluded from the analysis, this group is also found to favor a longer leave (OR: 1.59). Childcare values do not play a significant role in leave length preferences.

Table 1: Logistic regression results on leave length preferences and on gender division preferences (odds ratios)

| | | Leave length Wanting 5 months or more of leave (ref.: 0-4 months) | | Gender division Wanting a partly gendered or a gender equal division (ref.: fully gendered) | |
|--|---|--|--|--|----------|
| | | Sig. | Exp(B) | Sig. | Exp(B) |
| Institutional and cultural variables | Citizenship (ref.: Swiss nationals) Foreigners or binationals | 0.000 | 1.999*** | 0.062 | 0.648 |
| | Linguistic region (ref.: Swiss German) Latin region | 0.000 | 2.178*** | 0.653 | 1.111 |
| | Living environment (ref.: rural) Urban | 0.105 | 1.285 | 0.043 | 1.552* |
| Self-interest variables | Sex and Age group (ref.: men aged 50+) Women aged 18-49 years | 0.025 | 1.758* | 0.007 | 2.563** |
| | Women aged 50+ years | 0.167 | 1.361 | 0.145 | 1.527 |
| | Men aged 18-49 years | 0.257 | 1.304 | 0.293 | 1.394 |
| | Parenthood (ref.: childless) Parent (at least one child < 6 years) | 0.077 | 0.704 | 0.380 | 0.791 |
| | Parent (child aged > 6 years) | 0.191 | 0.680 | 0.190 | 0.597 |
| | Care load (Ref.: none) Low (1-9 hours/week) | 0.913 | 1.022 | 0.797 | 0.934 |
| | High (> 9 hours/week) | 0.010 | 1.761** | 0.202 | 1.460 |
| | Education (Ref.: primary) Secondary degree | 0.340 | 0.802 | 0.092 | 1.562 |
| | Tertiary degree | 0.918 | 1.030 | 0.003 | 3.179** |
| | Labour Market activity (Ref.: not in paid work) Working part time | 0.114 | 1.429 | 0.834 | 1.066 |
| Working full time | 0.853 | 1.038 | 0.815 | 1.066 | |
| Household income (Ref: low) Medium income | 0.519 | 1.130 | 0.235 | 1.332 | |
| High income | 0.582 | 1.132 | 0.455 | 1.254 | |
| Ideological variables | Religiosity (Ref.: non-religious) High religiosity | 0.127 | 0.719 | 0.011 | 0.493** |
| | Medium religiosity | 0.039 | 0.703* | 0.129 | 0.694 |
| | Childcare values (continuous variable, from low to highly traditional values) | 0.119 | 0.853 | 0.001 | 0.623*** |
| Political views (Ref.: Right-wing) | Left-wing | 0.000 | 3.209*** | 0.027 | 2.344* |
| | Center | 0.238 | 1.404 | 0.669 | 1.168 |
| | Missing | 0.025 | 1.588* | 0.392 | 1.255 |
| | Constant | 0.370 | 0.634 | 0.006 | 6.419 |
| R ² Nagelkerke | 0.204 | | 0.185 | | |
| Model | X ² (22)= 145.156, p<.001 | | X ² (22)= 94.259, p<.001 | | |
| N | 878 | | 788 | | |

Significance levels: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

The second logistic regression model analyzed the correlates of wanting a more gender equal leave than the current one; i.e., preferring for fathers to at least share part of the leave with mothers. Here too the model significantly explains leave gender division preferences ($X^2(22)= 94.259, p<.001$); 19% of the variance is explained (R^2 Nagelkerke = 0.185).

Regarding institutional and cultural factors, only the living environment has a significant effect on gender division of leave preferences, while citizenship and the linguistic region do not. Fathers' access and use of leave is more likely to be favored by urban respondents than by individuals living in rural environments (OR: 1.55). Even when controlling for childcare values (see below), this result suggests that living in larger cities and being confronted with more diversity overall, including family norms and maternal employment, likely makes individuals view fathers' leave uptake as more desirable.

Among self-interest variables, results show that being a woman aged 18-49 years as opposed to being a man aged 50+ increases the odds of preferring a partly gendered or gender equal division of leave (OR: 2.56). This suggests that women in childbearing and childrearing ages wish to share childcare responsibilities with men. Results show that education plays a significant role. As compared with those who have a primary education degree, the highly educated are more likely to want fathers' uptake of leave (OR: 3.18). This may be explained by the fact that highly educated couples may have more to gain if both parents are involved and share childcare after birth, instead of attributing this task to mothers only. Thus highly educated mothers have a higher opportunity cost than low educated ones if they forego paid work and are absent from the labor market for a long period. Another interpretation may be that since highly educated individuals usually hold more gender equal values, education may still reflect these attitudinal preferences, even if gender traditional values toward childcare are already controlled for. Results otherwise show that care load, parenthood, income and labour market activity do not significantly shape the way individuals feel about how the leave should be divided between parents.

Finally, ideational factors are also important: as expected those with a traditional view of the family and gender relations are less likely to want fathers' uptake of leave (OR: 0.62). Highly religious individuals are also less likely than the non-religious to consider fathers should at least take some of the leave (OR: 0.49). This result reflects the fact that religious

practices are often linked to preferences for more traditional family models and values. Having a left-wing political orientation as compared to a right-wing orientation increases the odds of wanting fathers' to take at least some of the leave (OR: 2.34). This result also reflects the tendency for left-wing parties to support more gender equal policies and family models, and right-wing parties to be more conservative.

7. Discussion and conclusion

The first aim of this study was to assess the public opinion in Switzerland regarding paid leaves for parents; in particular whether there was support for a longer and a more gender equal leave scheme than the current one. Results show there are both consensus as well as social cleavages, depending on the dimension considered. When it comes to leave length preferences, diverging views prevail. About half of respondents (53%) expect a paid leave of 5 months or more, which exceeds the 3,5 months currently available through maternity insurance. The study shows there is a gender and generational divide, with especially high dissatisfaction among women under 50 years: 68% who would prefer a leave of 5 months or more. These preferences for a longer leave among younger women can be put in perspective with the fact that Switzerland currently has one of the shortest post-natal paid leave in comparison with other industrialized countries. In 2017, 33 countries out of 42 reviewed granted 5 months or more of paid post-natal leave to parents (see Blum, Koslowski, & Moss, 2017, pp. 31-35). While the implementation of a minimal maternity leave in 2005 was a major stepping-stone for Swiss gender equality and family policies, debates about maternity leave extension, and parental and paternity leave implementation, are recurrent (FCWI, 2001, 2011; Valarino, 2014).

The study also shows there is considerably more consensus among respondents regarding the gender division of leave between parents. Results indicate that eight in ten respondents (without any significant gender differences) consider that fathers should at least take some paid leave at the birth of a child¹¹. These results are in line with those of Travail.Suisse in 2015, which found that over 80% of surveyed individuals were in favor of a paid paternity leave (Travail.Suisse, 2015). Importantly, results also show that a substantial proportion of respondents within this group – 34% of men and 44% of women – consider that parents should share the leave equally. This suggests women are particularly eager to see men engage more in childcare, in a context that is still very much marked by the predominance of

“modernized family traditionalism” (Levy et al., 2002). Indeed, the most widespread family model among couples with at least one child under 3 in Switzerland is the modified male breadwinner, where mothers are typically employed part-time and take on most of childcare and household chores, while men are employed full-time and dedicate far less time to unpaid care work (FSO, 2017). Overall, these leave policy preferences are in stark contrast with the current Swiss leave scheme where statutory federal parental and paternity leaves do not exist. It indicates that people consider fathers as legitimate caregivers and that the principle of statutory paid leave for fathers is widely accepted.

There is also consensus among respondents regarding the financing system of leave benefits, which in this case, matches and reflects much better the current system in Switzerland. Almost two third of the sample (64%) considers that leave expenses should be financed by both the government and employers. This roughly corresponds to the current Loss of Earnings Compensation Act for maternity benefits, which are collectively financed through wage contributions, and often complemented by employer benefits. This social insurance system has proven to be the most efficient in finding a consensus during the long political struggle for a federal maternity insurance (FCWI, 2001, 2011; Valarino, 2014).

The second aim of this study was to analyze in more details the factors related to leave policy preferences, in particular for individuals who prefer a longer and a more gender equal leave scheme than the one currently implemented in Switzerland. Results show that the institutional and cultural dimension clearly matters. Having been exposed to specific ideologies and policies and socialized in particular national or regional contexts implies that individuals develop different ideas about what is legitimate or not, and how policies should ideally look like. This is illustrated by the fact that foreigners and bi-nationals as well as residents in the Latin linguistic region of Switzerland are more likely to want a leave of 5 months or more. Urban respondents are also more likely to consider that fathers should at least take some leave, as compared to those living in rural environments. These results call for taking into account not only the influence of macro-level cross national differences as is often done in comparative welfare attitudinal research, but also institutional and cultural factors at the regional level when studying single countries (see for example Gelissen, 2008). This is especially true for the Swiss case, considering its cultural specificities (i.e., multi-lingual, multi-religious, high proportion of foreign-born residents), as well as its political institutions

(i.e., federalism). More generally, these results raise interesting questions for future research about the effect of social comparison mechanisms (for instance with policies in neighboring countries, or in the country of origin) in order to understand in more refined ways how individuals form their attitudes.

Self-interest theory is also relevant to understand leave policy preferences. Results show that individuals who usually bear most of childcare work and responsibility have higher odds of preferring a longer and more gender equal leave. As expected, women from the younger cohort are more likely than men from the older one to want a leave of at least 5 months and to want fathers to use them. Women's support for men's access and use of leaves – which is in line with previous results (see Fox et al., 2009; Hyde et al., 1993; Valarino et al., 2018) – likely reflects the “double shift” many experience and their interest in a more gender equal division of family work (see FSO, 2017). The study also shows that parenthood is not a determinant of leave preferences, but that care load is. Those most involved in care work in their everyday life are more likely to consider there should be a longer leave than what exists. It is striking that the social positioning of individuals (their economic and human capital) as well as their labor market participation barely plays a role for leave policy preferences. Results show that only for gender division of leave preferences, the educational level is influential, which may be an artifact of higher educated individuals' more equal gender values (see for example Davis & Greenstein, 2009). These results suggest that traditional social class cleavages may not be as relevant explaining attitudes toward care policies as they are explaining attitudes toward the welfare state in general or “traditional” social policies. When it comes to leave policy preferences, individuals' specific position and experience of division of paid and unpaid work in the family seems to matter most. Similar conclusions were drawn in a study analyzing care policies for children and the elderly in Spain (Valarino, Meil, & Rogero-García, 2016).

Results also show that ideational factors influence individuals' views about leave policies and expectations of a longer and more gender equal leave scheme. Religiosity reduces the likelihood to want a longer leave and to favor fathers' uptake of leave. Gender traditional individuals are also less likely to favor a more gender equal division of leave. Finally individuals with a left-wing political stance are more likely to want an extended leave length and to consider fathers should take at least some leave.

This study draws on recent data, which for the first time enables to study attitudes toward three dimensions of leave policies within a representative sample of the Swiss population. Considering the minimal and gendered leave and the increasing attention devoted to parental and paternity leaves in the last 10 to 15 years (see Lanfranconi & Valarino, 2014; Valarino, 2014, forthcoming), the questions addressed in this study are highly topical. However, because the data was collected in the frame of an international survey for comparative purposes (ISSP Research Group, 2016), survey items were formulated in general terms and therefore lack precision and do not refer to the specificities of the Swiss leave policy context. Thus, the data is used to explore potential support in Swiss public opinion in favor of a longer and more gender equal leave scheme. Caution is however needed, since individuals were asked hypothetical questions touching upon an ideal leave situation and scheme. They were not asked to give their opinion on a specific leave policy proposal with concrete public expense implications, as will be for instance the case in the frame of the national vote that will take place on the 4-week paternity leave popular initiative (see Federal Chancellery, 2018).

To sum up, results from this study suggest that there is a large consensus regarding the principle of fathers accessing and using leave in Switzerland, but that there are potentially more divisions when it comes to increasing the total length of paid leave. Thus the outcome of the national vote is not so clear-cut and will deserve much attention. Future research should notably take into account the influence of institutional, self-interest and ideational dimensions, which proved to be useful in this study to understand leave policy preferences. And mainly, it is the influence of framing processes in political and media debates that will be crucial in order to understand attitude formation and voting behavior, as research on previous maternity, parental and paternity leave votes and debates suggests (see for example Häusermann & Kübler, 2010; Lanfranconi & Valarino, 2014; Valarino & Bernardi, 2010).

8. Notes

¹ See <http://www.conge-paternite.ch/>.

² The medium category of individuals corresponds to those who are satisfied with the current leave scheme. The short and long categories denote individuals' dissatisfaction with the current leave scheme; they want either less or more than what exists.

³ The item initially had 5 categories. The category « gender equal » included the following two additional categories: the father should take most and the mother some (11 respondents) and the father should take all and the mother none (no respondents).

⁴ The threshold of 49 years corresponds to the end of the fertility period for women, as defined by the Swiss National Statistical Office.

⁵ Available data consisted in hours worked per week and not activity rates. The threshold to determine part-time is derived from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office definitions.

⁶ A substantial number of respondents have missing values for this variable (250 missing answers).

⁷ “A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works”; “All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job”; “A working mother can establish just as warm and secure relationship with her children as a mother who does not work”; “A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children”. Possible answers ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree on a 5-point Likert scale. The scales were reversed appropriately to build a coherent indicator across four items.

⁸ The Rumansch region is also included in this category but it only counts 4 respondents.

⁹ Due to too small numbers, it is not possible to distinguish between Europeans and non-Europeans. The majority of foreigners and bi-nationals are from Europe.

¹⁰ Odd ratios are rounded at two decimal digits.

¹¹ Unfortunately, the data does not enable to identify the precise length of leave that individuals consider desirable for fathers.

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